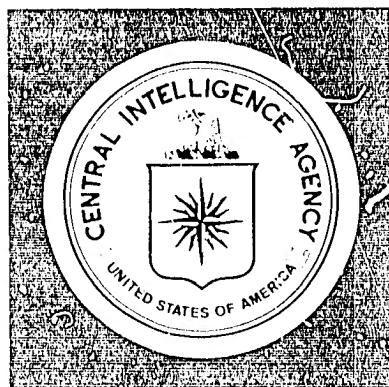


CIA-CR BR 75-72 BIOGRAPHIC REPORT FROM KINGDOM TO PEOPLE'S
REPUBLIC: LEADERS OF APPROVED FOR RELEASE UNDER E.O. 13526
DECEMBER 1975 CONFIDENTIAL/NX BR 75-72 1 OF 1

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(See inside cover)



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*From Kingdom to People's Republic:
Leaders of the New Lao Government*

Confidential
BP 75-72
December 1975

NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION
Unauthorized Disclosure Subject to Criminal Sanctions

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PREFACE

On 1-2 December 1975, the Communists held a National Congress of People's Representatives "composed of 264 representatives from all provinces throughout the country" in Vientiane. The Congress "agreed" to the abdication of King Savang Vatthana and the dissolution of Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma's Provisional Government of National Union (PGNU). It also voted unanimously to abolish the monarchy and establish the Lao People's Democratic Republic. Vientiane radio announced on 4 December that Prince Souphanouvong, chairman of the Lao Patriotic Front (LPF), was President of the "new republic" and Kaysone Phomvihan, secretary general of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP)—the Lao Communist Party—was Prime Minister. Souvanna Phouma was named adviser to the government, and the King was named presidential adviser. Both advisory positions are nominal and powerless, however.



Kaysone Phomvihan, Souphanouvong and Souvanna Phouma meet in Vientiane during government changeover

This report was prepared by the Central Reference Service and was coordinated within CIA as appropriate.

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The Communist Consolidation of Power

By these moves, the Lao Communists have dropped the coalition facade and gained complete administrative control of the country. The PGNU had been established on 5 April 1974, after intensive negotiations between representatives of the LPF and the Royal Lao Government (RLG). Many observers believed that the PGNU, which included individuals acceptable to both sides, had a better chance to survive than previous attempts to create coalition governments. The Communist takeovers in South Vietnam and Cambodia during the spring of 1975 ended whatever prospects for survival the PGNU may have had. The transformation of the Kingdom of Laos into a "people's democracy" started almost immediately after those takeovers. Communist officials began to replace RLG incumbents in civilian and military posts. RLG officials who did not flee Laos were forced to attend reeducation seminars at LPF headquarters in Sam Neua and elsewhere in the country.

As the removal of non-Communist officials from their posts accelerated, in August the Communists made wholesale changes in local and provincial governing bodies. They staged various "liberation" rallies throughout the country, and Communist media stressed that the rallies were the culmination of 30 years of struggle and indicated the replacement of "reactionary administrations" with "revolutionary administrations."

After nationwide local "elections" on 23-24 November, the Communists held mass rallies in Vientiane and the provinces to denounce the PGNU and the monarchy and to demand that the LPF Central Committee convene a "national congress of people's representatives" to complete the process of ridding Laos of the "feudalist regime."

Political Orientation of the New Regime

With the Communists now firmly in charge, the political course that the new Lao regime will take is the key question for most observers. Individuals who are considered close to the North Vietnamese have the upper hand in the new government. The real power in the regime almost certainly lies with Prime Minister Kaysone rather than with President Souphanouvong, who in the past served as the symbol of the Lao left. Souphanouvong's position in the new governmental setup will be mainly ceremonial.



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